



Brownfields Initiatives in Region 5

Office of Outreach and Special Projects (5101)

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower States, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. Currently, there are a number of Regionally funded Brownfields-related activities, such as targeted site assessments in urban areas, financial support of State voluntary cleanup programs, financial support of State regulation development, Inter-governmental Personnel Assignments (IPA) to cities, and outreach activities. Some of these activities are in the form of Regional or National pilots, while others are smaller scale actions such as prospective purchaser agreements. This fact sheet is one in a series of ten which outline Brownfields-related activities occurring in each of the ten Regions.

OVERVIEW

In October 1996, Region 5 created a Regional Brownfields Team to reduce the barriers to brownfields redevelopment through technical assistance and outreach. The team recognizes the link between a community's environmental and economic health, and it promotes solutions that address both. The Region 5 Multi-media Team brings together a variety of individuals and expertise that will result in greater integration of Regional programs and perspectives in addressing the barriers to brownfields redevelopment including:

- Real and perceived liability;
- Inconsistent State and local capacity;
- Limited experience of stakeholders; and
- Lack of exchange of both information and knowledge.

The Region 5 Brownfields program is designed to address the barriers identified above by providing technical assistance and outreach to a wide variety of audiences including: State and local entities; other Federal agencies; educational and non-profit entities; private sector entities; and the general public.

LIABILITY ISSUES

Region 5 has taken the following steps to address environmental liability issues associated with the cleanup and redevelopment of brownfields:

- Sponsored a Regional summit on issues related to redevelopment of brownfields, "Urban Environment and Economic Redevelopment: Brownfields Strategies for Midwestern Cities," in March 1995;
- Named an EPA ombudsperson to help buyers and sellers solve environmental contamination problems at brownfields;
- Met with representatives from large national banks and environmental insurance companies and developers in August 1995, to discuss the impact of environmental liability insurance on banks and developers in terms of their willingness to become involved with brownfields;
- Issued comfort letters to affected property owners; and
- Currently amending existing Superfund Memoranda of Agreement (SMDAs) to

provide “programmatic comfort” to State voluntary cleanup programs. Four SMOAs have been amended (Indiana, Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin).

STATE AND LOCAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Region 5 recognizes the need to provide human and financial resources to State and local governments that are enhancing their capabilities to address brownfields. To date, Region 5 has:

- Awarded a site assessment grant to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to hire staff to conduct Phase I and Phase II site investigations of brownfields;
- Awarded a site assessment grant to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) to support the development of a site assessment team comprising representatives of EPA, IEPA, and local governments, to select and investigate brownfields in Chicago and East St. Louis;
- Awarded a grant to IEPA to research and address the connection between underground storage tanks and brownfields;
- Developed “reuse action teams” comprising Federal, State, and local government officials to remove site-specific obstacles to redevelopment;
- Awarded a pilot grant to the University of Illinois Extension Service to develop procedures to stop non-point source runoff from abandoned lots in Chicago and turn the lots into stable, vegetated areas for use by the surrounding community;
- Awarded a grant to the Center for Neighborhood Technology, a non-profit organization in Chicago, to test the capacity of local non-profit organizations to redevelop brownfields;
- Awarded a site assessment grant to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to assist the State's Reclamation Program;

- Awarded a site assessment grant to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to support the expansion of voluntary cleanups at contaminated sites;
- Awarded a Core Program grant to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to support the development of the State's voluntary cleanup program under the Land Recycling Act of 1994;
- Sent IPAs to Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan; and East Chicago, Indiana;
- Awarded a Core Program grant to IEPA to support the development of the State's Brownfields program and new voluntary cleanup regulations, and to support outreach to communities located near brownfields;
- Awarded a Core Program grant to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency to develop regulations for the State's voluntary cleanup program;
- Tested the use of the emergency removal authority to help local communities put sites back into productive use quickly and efficiently; and
- Awarded a site assessment grant to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) to support the development of a site assessment team comprising representatives of EPA, IDEM, and local governments, to select and investigate local brownfields.

OUTREACH EFFORTS

Region 5 has encouraged involvement and education of communities in the remediation and redevelopment of brownfields. The Region has:

- Created an Environmental Finance Center at Cleveland State University, with assistance from EPA's Office of Administration and Resource Management, to train environmental professionals and assist local governments in financing redevelopment activities;

- Supported the development of an umbrella non-profit organization that can target outreach and technical assistance to community development corporations and community banks on technical brownfields issues;
- Awarded a Core Program grant to IDEM to support Indiana's outreach efforts;
- Supported the participation of Region 5 personnel in numerous community-wide Brownfields policy development forums throughout the Region;
- Awarded a grant to Wayne County and the City of Detroit in Michigan to support a Brownfields Roundtable Discussion in the Detroit area;
- Developed a Worldwide Web page on brownfields redevelopment in the Midwest;
- Supported three field hearings through a grant to the Northeast Midwest Institute;
- Organized a hearing in Indianapolis on issues related to financing redevelopment of brownfields, in partnership with EPA's Office of Administration and Resource Management and the Environmental Financial Advisory Board;
- Entered into a cooperative agreement with Clean Sites, a non-profit environmental policy institute, to facilitate community-wide discussions of brownfields issues in Northwest Indiana;
- Assisted in hosting a National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) public dialogue in the City of Detroit, Michigan on June 9, 1995; and
- Held an Insurance Forum in August 1995 to discuss insurance and finance related issues in brownfields redevelopment in the Midwest.

PILOTS

In November 1993, EPA selected the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission (CPC) in Cleveland, Ohio, for a Brownfields pilot to support the assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment of brownfields within Cuyahoga County. The CPC Brownfields project has also been supported by \$1.7 million in private cleanup money and \$110,000 in contributions from private foundations. To date, the program has generated an increase of \$685,000 in annual property taxes and more than 100 new jobs.

In July 1995, EPA selected the City of Detroit, the City of Indianapolis, and the West Central Municipal Conference (WCMC), a regional group of 36 municipalities in Cook County, Illinois, for Brownfields pilots. In addition, in January 1996, EPA Region 5 announced it would sponsor Regional Brownfields pilots in the Cities of Gary, East Chicago, and Hammond, Indiana in partnership with EPA's Common Sense Initiative (CSI) Iron and Steel Sector Brownfields Workgroup to promote the restoration of the economic and environmental health of the three cities through numerous partnerships and broad community involvement. For full descriptions of these pilots, see the Regional and National pilot fact sheets or the individual pilot fact sheets.

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